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LESS HOT AIR ABOUT COW EMISSIONS

Influential new figures from the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation at last show a more accurate picture of greenhouse gas emissions from dairy products.

Scientists at the FAO found that dairy is responsible for only 2.7% of global man-made emissions. By comparison, aviation in the UK accounts for some 7% of national emissions.

The report's findings mean that dairy cows are not the environmental villains that some have claimed, backing up another recent study that found the cows themselves are responsible directly for just 1.2% of UK emissions (*A Sustainable Dairy Sector*, CE Delft, October 2008).

Dairy UK Director General Jim Begg welcomed the new study. He said: "This high level report from the FAO has been two years in the making and at last sheds light on the true impact of dairy farming on the environment.

"In producing some of the nation's most popular and nutritious foods, dairy cows, milk tankers and dairies emit less than 2.7% of the world's greenhouse gases. Of course, we're still working to lower that figure, but the report shows that the industry's critics are the ones really producing hot air.

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“The FAO has confirmed that northern Europe is one of the most efficient regions in the world to produce milk. And thanks to initiatives such as the UK’s Milk Roadmap, the dairy industry is constantly improving its record by cutting energy use, further reducing cow emissions, using more recycled plastic in milk bottles and preserving valuable water supplies.

“So consumers should carry on enjoying the British milk, cheese, yogurt and other dairy products that they love.”

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

The FAO report is called Greenhouse Gas Emissions from the Dairy Sector – a Life Cycle Assessment. It was produced in response to a call by the dairy sector for more information after the publication of the Livestock’s Long Shadow report in 2006. The 2006 report found global emissions from all livestock accounted for 18% of the total, but did not supply specifics for each sector. Further reports on emissions from other livestock sectors will be published by the FAO later in the summer.

The latest report details full lifecycle emissions from the dairy sector in different parts of the world, as well as breaking those emissions down into those attributable to farming, processing and distribution. Key figures include:

- 2.7% of global greenhouse gas emissions come from the dairy chain
- Average emissions per kg of milk produced globally is 2.44kg of CO₂ equivalent
- Emissions per kg of milk produced range from 1.3kg to 7.5kg of CO₂ equivalent around the world
- Europe produced almost 25% of global milk but only 15% of greenhouse gas emissions of the global dairy sector
- 83% of dairy emissions in Europe are generated by activities on the farm

The results of the latest FAO study will be used by the global dairy industry as a benchmark for further reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. See www.dairy-sustainability-initiative.org for more detail.

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In the UK, a range of studies have indicated that the dairy sector is one of the most efficient in the world. We have put in place with government a Milk Roadmap, which sets ambitious environmental targets for farmers, processors and retailers.

Under the Roadmap, farmers have to agreed to cut water use, reduce nitrogen run-off and enhance biodiversity; processors are using more recycled plastic to make milk bottles, turning to renewable energy, eliminating waste to landfill from large sites and cutting their water use. See www.dairyUK.org for more detail on the Roadmap.

About Dairy UK:

Dairy UK is a trade association that represents the interests of dairy farmers, producer co-ops, milk processors and doorstep deliverymen. For more information visit www.dairyUK.org.



Proud of Dairy is a Dairy UK campaign to raise the profile of the dairy industry. Are you Proud of Dairy too? If so, why not support the campaign by clicking onto www.proudofdairy.com where you can find more details.

Key Figures from 2010 FAO Report

All figures 2007

Absolute figures

- Total milk production 553 million tons
- Total meat from dairy herd 34 million tons (57% of total global beef)
- Total emissions 1,969 million tons CO₂-eq (milk 1,328; meat 641)

Percentage of global GHG emissions

- Global milk and meat production from dairy herd and processing 4.0% of total global GHG emissions
- Milk production, processing and transport 2.7% (remove meat - 1.3%)

Emissions per kg of milk

- Global average emissions per kg milk 2.4 kg CO₂-eq
- Range 1.3 to 7.5 kg CO₂-eq (North America – Sub S Africa)
- Western Europe 1.5 kg CO₂-eq

Highlights

- Europe produces almost 25% of global milk but is responsible for less than 15% of GHG emissions from global sector
- In Europe, on average, GHG emissions related to processing are estimated at 0.155 kg of CO₂-eq. per kilogram of milk at farm gate (0.155 kg CO₂-eq/kg milk). Of this, 0.086 kg of CO₂-eq. is from processing. Packaging accounts for 0.038 kg, and transport adds another 0.030 kg of CO₂-eq/kg milk
- Western Europe - 83 percent of emissions are generated by activities on the farm, globally 93 percent
- Although average GHG emissions from land use change are relatively low, Western Europe is the highest at 0.11 kg CO₂-eq per kg of FPCM, contributing 7% to the overall GHG emissions in Western Europe
- On average grassland systems have higher emissions than mixed farming systems. Grassland systems contribute about 2.72 kg CO₂-eq/kg FPCM compared to mixed systems that contribute on average 1.78 kg CO₂-eq/kg FPCM. However the share of the milk production in the temperate regions (grassland and mixed) is larger than their share in the total emissions, indicating a lower emission per kg of milk than the average.